

houses & lands, slaying the Saxon lords
in open fight, and, often, the tender
ladies & children in cold blood.

When Hereward heard these things, he
knew that his home had need of him;
he thought of his mother, now a widow, &
of the little lad, his brother: so he crossed
the sea once more, &, all alone & at
nightfall, drew nigh to his old home
of Bourne.

The hall was all ablaze with many
candles as if a great feast were ~~being~~
forward, & mad drunken shouts came
from within: but what is that struck huff
on the Gate? It is the beautiful head of
his own young brother, with the long
golden hair all dabbled in blood.

Hereward went in, & found his father's
hall full of drinking Normans: they
arose ~~to~~ fall upon him, and, as they
came, he slew them, man by man,
until none was left to tell the tale.

Then he went above, & found his Mother
sitting, with white face, by the side of her
headless boy: very thankful was she to
have Hereward again to love her & take care
of her; & very thankful was her son to
have his mother's blessing after the long
years of his outlawry.

Though he had slain the Normans, the
Domes of Bourne was no place for the lady
Godiva, so Hereward took boat & carried
her to Crowland Dale, to the Saxon Abbey

of St. Futhlac.

218p38mc34 13

Then he split the war arrow into four,
I sent round the four pieces, north, south,
east, west, to all the men of the Jens: if
the Master were not at home, the arrow was
left sticking in his door, or in his
big chair by the fire, for him to pass
on to his neighbours when he came. By
this arrow, the Jens men knew they
were called to battle with the Normans.
All the fowls of the mere seemed to
cry to them that Hereward was
come to be their leader.

Meantime, Hereward went over sea again
to bring ship loads of North men to their
aid; but the Conqueror was too wise for
the North men & they were beaten back.
They would not take ship again without pay,
however; so they set their hearts on the gold
in the Golden Burgh. Once again their
terrible "Yuck-hey-saa-saa-saa!" was
heard by the monks of Peterborough as
the Norse men rowed up the River, & once
again a terrible time of burning &
slaying followed that wild war cry.

Then they all, Danes & English, came
to Ely Isle, & after a long Council in
the great hall, it was settled that the
Danes should go back to their own land.
Hereward went to the top of the Minster tower,
at

218p9me34 14

and watched the Anse fleaching with countless
owls as they went. And when they were
all out of sight, he went back, & lay down
on his bed & slept - once & for all, for
indeed, they were in very evil case.

When Williams heard that the Danes
were gone, he marched upon Ely; as he
came from Cambridge, he could see the
Minster towers rising from among
the trees, & doubtless he thought that
Ely would be an easy conquest. But
men told him that between him &
those trees lay a black abys of mud
& peat & reeds, with the deep sullen
Anse winding through it. The narrowest
space between dry land & dry land
was a full half mile; & how to cross
that half mile, no man knew.

On the west, what was there? a wilderness
of meres, seas, & floating alder beds,
through which the few men alone
could wander with leaping pole & log
canoe. On the east, again, were meres
& fens, & Anse waters, broader & deeper
than before, because Anse had been
joined by the Cam.

So Williams' host - camped themselves
in Killyingham field; & down the bridge-
way, poured the men, bearing timbers
& rafts cut from the hills, that they
might bridge the black half mile, for that,

after

118 p 10 cm 10

after all seemed the only way by which
they could get upon the Isle.

They tried to drive piles, but the piles
would not hold; so they made a floating
bridge with long beams, & blown up catute
hides to float them.

At last, the bridge was finished, &
floated safe across the river, so that
the English on the island could reach
it with a long pole. They would have
destroyed it, but Hereward bade them
leave it alone; he knew what would happen.

And now came along the bridge a
dark column of men in glittering helmets,
knights & footmen. They came; they
pushed along the bridge - a more & more
crowded mass; men fell off into
the mire & water; still, on they came
in thousands, & fresh thousands
followed; but they were not yet at the
bridge. The bridge strained more & more, parted
one side - way and it gave, & then,
turning over, cast into that foul
stream the flower of Norman chivalry,
leaving a line - a full quarter of a mile
in length - of wretches drowning in
the dark water, or in the bottomless
slime of peat & mud.

William, they say, struck his tent &
departed forthwith, groaning from deep
grief of heart; & so ended the first battle
of

of Aldreth.

So Ely Isle became a Camp of Refuge for Hereward & his men for many a month. What with the numberless wild fowl of the meres, & the fish of the rivers, & the cattle they managed to bring in from time to time, they did not fare badly upon Ely. Still, it was dull work, shut up in that marshy island; they made many a raid upon the Romans, but were never strong enough for a great fight; & there are many tales of how Hereward, who loved adventure, went forth to explore at the risk of his life.

The next summer, William came to Aldreth again, or, rather, to Willingham; this time he had piles driven into the black ooze to make a causeway broad & strong for his men; & he had a strong, strong bridge made to carry them over Ouse; & the Romans swarmed upon causeway & bridge as before, & this time the English in Aldreth felt might well tremble.

But see, - what is that? a puff of smoke, a wisp of flame; & then another & another; and a canoe shot out from among the reeds on the Willingham side & plied into the reeds of the island. The English have set the reeds on fire about the Roman gale.

As came the flames, clapping & crackling
Cauphory,

Campfire & shrieking like a live fiend.
It reached the causeway, & sprang over
the heads of the mass of men: the timbers
of the bridge caught fire beneath their
feet. They sprang from the burning
foot-way, & plunged into the fathomless
turf.

The next day, William withdrew his
army. The men refused to face
again that blood-stained grass.

This was how the men of the fens held
out against a foreign foe. But it
was all in vain; they did not know
when they were beaten.

For full seven years did Hereward
hold this Camp of Refuge, though times
grew hard & food was scarce. At
last, the monks of Ely, weary of
such a life, played their own
people false & let the Normans
in by stealth.

Hereward & his English got out of
Ely, but would not yet give up hope
of the English cause: they took to
the fen-woods & lived on the tall
sedges in the great forest which
stretch'd up in those days west
of Bowene.

But the day came when Hereward
knew he was the last man in
England to hold out against the
Conqueror. That it was not use to struggle
any

Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

"Forward the Light Brigade!"
No man was there dismayed;
Not though the soldier knew
Some one had blundered:
Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die;
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon in front of them,
Volley'd and Thunder'd at.
Storm'd at with shot & shell,
Boldly they rode and well,
Into the jaws of Death -
Into the mouth of hell -
Rode the six hundred.

Flashed all their sabres bare,
Flashed all at once in air,
Like ring the gunners there;
Charging an army, while
All the world wondered;
Plunged in the battery smoke,
With many a desperate stroke,
The Russian line they broke,
Then they rode back, but not -
Not the six hundred.

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon behind them,
Volley'd & Thunder'd.